

accepts one set of facts in one connection to discard them ruthlessly in another. His brutal realism repels us, but we derive some consolation from the fact that he at least contradicts himself. While, for instance, enunciating the most brutal maxims of despotism in respect of the end in view—the establishment or preservation of the State—he admits that unlimited power is hurtful, and denounces in no unmeasured language the despot who sacrifices the interest of the State to his own personal advantage. Let such a ruler take warning from the reigns of the bad emperors of Rome. "He will see Rome in flames, the capitol demolished by the hands of the citizens, the ancient temples desolate, all ceremonies corrupted, the cities full of adulterers; he will behold the sea covered with exiles, the shores stained with blood. In Rome he will see cruelties innumerable, and nobility, riches, honour, and, above all, virtue regarded as capital sins. . . . And doubtless, if he be born of woman, he will feel terror of any imitation of bad times, and will be inflamed by an immense desire to follow those that were good."

The moralist speaks sometimes even in Machiavelli, though we may perhaps in the next sentence be shocked by the relapse into the most sweeping contradiction of such teaching, in the attempt to invest his prince, in the pursuit of State ends, with a political conscience that is truly diabolic. The prince should eschew evil by the example of a Nero, and yet in the same breath Romulus is pronounced a model statesman because he murdered his brother Remus and Titus Tatius Sabinus. The end, Machiavelli will reply, justifies the means in politics. Unfortunately, he might find examples enough, in modern as well as ancient history, to justify his belief; but he might at least have qualified the admission by the reminder that even history is not the decisive arbiter in such questions. History, in the Machiavellian sense, is no infallible guide. It does not show that the unscrupulous statesman always attains his end, even when his object is the good of the State. It shows equally that he may fail to do so. If some succeed, that is no reason for making their success the rule. It is only to a degenerate age that the following dictum, for instance, can commend itself: "When it is an absolute question of the welfare of our country, we must admit of no con-